

God Cannot Lie

Are some things impossible, even for an omnipotent God? Some have tried to make the argument that because the Bible teaches that God cannot lie and it also teaches that God is all-powerful that there must be a contradiction, therefore the Bible cannot be from God. God being all-powerful or omnipotent means that there are no limitations upon His power, yet “impossible” would indicate limits. Admittedly, at first glance, these two concepts **appear** to contradict each other; however, no such contradiction does indeed exist. God’s omnipotence is clearly demonstrated by His creation of the universe, our planet, life and all things that now exist. (Genesis 1; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17). While it is a fact that God is omnipotent, it is also factual to say that God is Truth. Why? It is factual because absolute Truth is part of the very nature of who God. Jesus said, “*I am the way, **the truth**, and the light...*” (John 14:6, emphasis mine) and He also taught, “*I and my Father are one.*” (John 10:30; cf. John 1:1, 17:22) If Jesus is the Truth (He is) and He and His Father are one (they are), then logically God is Truth – it is one of His Divine attributes. While God’s power is unlimited in reference to things that are in accordance with His Divine nature, He still cannot do anything that is contrary to His Divine nature. Some things simply go against the very nature of God and are therefore impossible, even illogical. For example, an elephant cannot flap his ears and fly. This is simply not possible because it goes against the very nature of elephants. It is illogical to think that a man can “rain” or that soil can write a book. Some things when ascribed to God are just as impossible and every bit as illogical as these examples.

Scripture reveals at least three things that our God of Truth cannot do. First, God cannot tempt or be tempted with evil. James 1:13, “*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man...*” Second, God

cannot look upon evil. Habakkuk 1:13, “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? ...*” Third, it is “*impossible for God to lie...*” (Hebrews 6:18). All three things listed address God’s attributes with regard to evil. He can no sooner do evil than an elephant can fly or a man can “rain”. He cannot do evil, think evil, tolerate evil or “speak” evil. Evil is against the very nature of God. All lying is evil because it originates from Satan who is the “*father of lies.*” (John 8:44 C.f. Genesis 3:4). God’s Word forbids lying. (Colossians 3:9; Ephesians 4:25) God cannot do what His word specifically forbids. The Bible teaches that “*all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death...*” (Revelation 21:8) Could a Just God condemn men for lying, yet be a liar Himself? God forbid!

Eric Lyons wrote the following regarding the fact that God cannot lie:

While God can do whatever is **possible** to be done, in reality, He will only do what is in harmony with His nature. For example, the bible states unequivocally that God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). He is a Being whose very essence entails truthfulness. Falsehood is completely out of harmony with His divine nature.¹

The Bible both explicitly and implicitly tells us that God cannot lie; that for God, lying would be impossible.

- *“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Numbers 23:9)*
- *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began...” (Titus 1:2)*

- *“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us...” (Hebrews 6:18)*
- *“God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged...” (Romans 3:4)*

It is impossible for God to lie, yet some passages of Scripture **seem** to indicate that God has, at times, lied or been deceitful in some of His dealings with mankind. Skeptics often refer to 2 Thessalonians 2:11, “*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie...*” and 1 Kings 22:20-23, “*And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.” Both passages appear to indicate that God has, in the past, sent a “lying spirit” or a “strong delusion” in order to deceive.*

In 1 Kings 22, if one would simply read the context, it is clear that in 1 Kings 22:20-23 that the Lord’s prophet Micaiah was relaying what he saw in a vision. Notice 1 Kings 22:17 “*And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd...*” (emphasis mine) and in verse 19, “*And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.*” (emphasis mine) In verse 17 Micaiah says that in a vision he saw all of Israel and in

verse 19 he saw in a vision the Lord Himself upon His throne. In a prophetic vision there is often the use of highly figurative language.

In both of these passages a figure of speech known as the “Idiom of Permission” has been employed. Wayne Jackson describes this type of figurative language as follows:

...there is a common idiom in sacred literature by which the permissive will of God is expressed in forceful, active jargon. For example, the Lord is said to have “deceived” His people (Jeremiah 4:10), or to have given them “statutes that were not good” (Ezekiel 20:25). In the New Testament, God is characterized as sending a strong delusion that some might believe a lie and be condemned (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

All of these passages simply indicate that when men are determined to disobey their Maker, He will allow them to follow the base inclination of their own hearts.”²

There are several other scriptures that could be observed that **seem** to indicate God using deception. However, one needs to keep in mind that the Bible clearly indicates that it is impossible for God to speak a lie. Passages that **appear** to the contrary need to be carefully examined, **in their context**, using a few simple logical rules.³ One, If God cannot lie then it stands to reason that God’s inspired scriptures (which are literally the words that God “breathed”) are true and without contradiction. Two, the appearance of a contradiction does not make it a contradiction. Aristotle stated, “That the same thing should both be and not be for the same person and in the same respect is impossible.” In other words, a door cannot be both open and shut at the same time, or in the same sense. A statement that the door is open could simply be referring to it being unlocked. Three, if there is any feasible or logical answer that would void out the possibility of a contradiction then it cannot be a contradiction. Four, if there is figurative language employed

then it is not a contradiction, as in the two passages cited above.

In spite of what skeptics may say, we can know that our God is a God of Truth (Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16). We can be assured, that even though He is omnipotent in accordance with His Divine Character, it is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2). Men can and all too often do lie, which is why in business we often have to run background checks and sign legally binding agreements, just in case one party or the other is lying. In this brief article we have taken a look at God’s background and found Him to be without any history of lying or deceit. We have investigated some accusations to the contrary and found them to be entirely baseless. God cannot lie and furthermore He is faithful in keeping the “Precious Promises” He has made to mankind. “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations...” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Endnotes

¹Lyons, Eric, The Anvil Rings, Answers to Alleged Bible Discrepancies, Volume 2 (Apologetics Press Inc. Montgomery, AL. 2005) p.31

²Jackson, Wayne, Does God Condone Lying? (RLINK"<http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/686-does-god-condone-lying>" <http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/686-does-god-condone-lying>)

³Lyons, Eric, The Anvil Rings, Answers to Alleged Bible Discrepancies, Volume 1 (Apologetics Press Inc. Montgomery, AL. 2003) pp. 8-19

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